

Anthropology in London Day 2012

Certainty?

To what extent is 'certainty' a viable starting point for 21st-century anthropology?

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Abstracts

Panel 1: Landscape and waste

Luna Glucksberg (Goldsmiths)

A better future? Regeneration and recycling in south-east London

This paper will consider issues of certainty, uncertainty and futures, exploring parallels between physical regeneration of an area in south-east London and the waste behaviours of its residents at home. Both processes had to do with questions of value and waste: what should be kept and what should be thrown away. I am not here suggesting that demolishing a building is the same as chucking packaging in the bin, of course. However, especially at a symbolic level, certain decisions to keep or 'throw away' houses, communities, people and things seemed to be connected. Specifically, I explore an unspoken metaphor that equated what was happening on the estates in terms of regeneration with recycling, meaning that the general discourse promoted by various bodies and agencies – local and national government, developers and so on – was that the area was being improved, made better.

However, from speaking with my respondents and observing their homes and behaviours, the facilities that they did or did not have and the ways in which they were spoken about, it was difficult to shake the impression that what was going on could also be seen as a generalised wastage of the area and its inhabitants. By this I mean that their homes were being demolished, they were told to move away and, by and large, a new affluent middle class was moved into the new homes built where the old estates once stood. At the same time, those lucky enough to still have homes were systematically excluded, by the state in the form of the local authority, from exactly those individualised recycling practices that seemed to be so important to creating 'valuable' citizens who 'cared' for their environment and did 'the right thing' (see Hawkins 2006 for a good explanation of the moral value of recycling). In this context residents' futures, the futures of their homes and of their environment in general, as perceived through recycling as an act of faith in the future, a 'good' thing for an imagined suffering planet were at stake together with the future of the area, generating both certainty and uncertainty.

Sona Lutherova (Institute of Ethnology, Slovak Academy of Sciences)

Sweet property o'mine: housing strategies in the process of home-making in post-socialist Bratislava

After 1989, private property became a symbol of a new era in central Europe – an ideological tool – but also a vessel for creating and realising identities. For young people in post-socialist Bratislava, buying an apartment is the most common way to ensure one's housing. It is a matter of values and preferences, but usually also a sole option with almost no rental market in the game. Therefore, buying a property is accompanied by personal sacrifices and debts, resulting in uncertainties for long years to come. In this, private property operates as both a token of risk and a source of safety. The aim of the paper is to analyse the housing strategies of young people in the post-socialist context. Methodologically, the research draws upon a fusion between theories of material culture and economic anthropology (with the focus on postsocialism). To feel at home means to make it one's own, hence to dive into the process of constant re-negotiation. In relation to this, both home and property are parts of the same ongoing process of appropriation – influenced by taste preferences, ideal notions and social aspirations, as well as broader social and economic factors. The data originates from a yearlong intensive fieldwork with 35 informants in Bratislava. Various qualitative in depth methods were used to reflexively analyse home-property relations in their different aspects. As the results show, in a society of uncertainties, private property is conceptualised as a personal goal and point of stability, but it also adds specific tensions and dilemmas to the notion of home.

Alina Branda (Babes Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania)

External Interventions and New Landscapes. A Case Study from Rural Transylvania

This paper draws on intensive fieldwork in Săvădisla, a village near Cluj, in Transylvania, the western part of Romania to consider how communities have experienced a highway construction project in their immediate vicinity. The paper considers perceptions of the highway construction project as an intrusion and, at the same time, understandings that it is as strengthening cultural structures, limiting changes.

The entire project is enmeshed in media debates, arguments, political splits and conflicting political discourses with little attention paid to the 'affected communities' and their experiences.

In the paper, I consider current narratives on highway construction, and look at new meanings given to properties. I consider villagers' relations with material goods, cultural patrimony and the dynamics which transform or highlight marginal groups-prosperous groups in new conditions.

My paper considers big and small changes through negotiated processes in Săvădisla, the 'realness' of transformations and whether external intervention 'encourage' the resurgence of cultural patterns.

William Wheeler (Goldsmiths)

Aral-88: waste, ecology and perestroika

Once the fourth-largest inland body of water in the world, since the 1960s the Aral Sea has shrunk to a fraction of its former size, as a result of Soviet irrigation of cotton and rice along its feeder rivers. There have been adverse effects on the local climate and on the health of the local population, and the once-thriving local fishing industry collapsed in the 1980s. In 1988 an expedition comprising writers, journalists and academics, organised by the Soviet literary journal *Novy Mir* and the newspaper *Pamir* travelled to the region to assess the causes of the disaster. The expedition was called Aral-88. In this paper I analyse the texts which emerged from this expedition. I outline the political context of perestroika and glasnost in which the expedition took place. I argue that for the participants in the expedition, the Aral Sea disaster was a powerful symbol not only for other ecological crises in the country, but also for the structural political, economic and social problems of the time. In these texts, the Aral Sea disaster is a metonym, a part and symptom of a much broader malaise. But I also suggest that the disaster functions metaphorically, in particular in the connections between water and money: as a result of the administrative structures of the command economy, just as the water which flows from nature is wasted, so too are the roubles flowing from the state wasted.

Zuzana Hrdlickova (Goldsmiths)

The birth pains of Indian disaster management institutions

Numerous disasters hit India every year. Some like floods and cyclones repeat with chilling regularity and are fairly predictable. Others like earthquakes and man-made disasters are less so. India has recently fundamentally transformed its approach to disasters, moving from response mode to mitigation. This paradigm shift, embedded in the Disaster Management Act (2005), has led to foundation of new institutions, such as the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM). Although uncertainty seems to be their major focus, these bodies both deal with existing certainties and seek to produce new ones. On the one hand, as institutions run by modernists by conviction, with the ultimate vision of 'disaster-free India', they strive to provide Indian citizens with certainty of safety through deployment of technology and science. On the other, widespread fatalism – i.e. certainty that destiny is predetermined – renders their risk mitigation activities futile in the eyes of majority. The new framework of disaster management in India has become a new significant space for overcoming political boundaries and is seen as potentially fulfilling the country's international ambitions, as can be demonstrated by the activities of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the deployment of Indian disaster responders in the aftermath of the devastating tsunami in Japan, 2011. My paper, based on an analysis of disaster management texts and fieldwork, looks at how these organisations encounter multiple certainties in their operations in the wake of their existence and how they translate them within material realities of the Indian state.

Panel 2: Uncertain migrant futures

Rueben Andersson (LSE)

Ceuta blues: irregular migrants and the politics of time in a Spanish enclave

Ceuta and Melilla, Spain's minuscule enclaves in North Africa, have in the past decade become transit points and offshore holding sites for irregular migrants on their way to Europe. Cared for in a state-run reception centre while waiting for an eventual exit to the Iberian peninsula, the African and Asian migrants who make it there find themselves immobilised for months or years before being set free or deported. The result is a silent battle over time with the authorities, in which migrants' futures and pasts are bracketed, leaving them with an eventless present of waiting for a decision on their fate. In this spatial and temporal gap, the migrants are inserted into a regime of interlocking temporalities: police time for surveillance and apprehension, 'camp time' with its schedules and routines, and time for knowledge-gathering and observation by visiting journalists, dignitaries and researchers. Through this temporal regime, the 'illegal immigrant' is produced as a contradictory subject: idle and scheming, visible and invisible, good and bad, captive and mobile. This paper explores the varied migrant strategies for engaging with this contradictory temporal regime. Some try to render themselves invisible to the authorities or else launch loud protests; others hope to avoid deportation by extending their time in the enclaves; yet others co-operate and are rewarded with a busy schedule and hopes of a future. Meanwhile, most of the migrants leave their fate in the hands of God rather than with the Spanish state. With their migratory projects on hold, the near future vacated for them and their past temporarily disowned (cf. Guyer), the far-ahead future of deliverance becomes all the more real.

Anna Tuckett (LSE)

Permits, passports and moving on: migrants' imaginings of the future and their experiences with the Italian documentation regime

Uncertainty and insecurity characterise migrants' experiences with the Italian documentation regime. Permit renewal is contingent on employment with the Italian documentation regime, employment and salary. For many migrants, the possibility of falling into 'illegality' is very real. This insecure situation was described by my informants as like living in a cage or a prison, where making concrete plans for the future was often impossible. Respite from the endless and precarious cycle of permit renewal was possible through the acquiring of the long-term permit or citizenship. However, obtaining a more secure status was extremely difficult and available only to those who had spent many years in the country. For many migrants in Bologna, whatever their legal status, looking to the future meant departure from Italy. Italy was often seen as inferior to other more modern and 'serious' European countries, and better quality lives were envisaged in France, Germany or the UK. Paradoxically, it was not necessarily those with expulsions who were more likely to permanently leave Italy. Rather, those migrants who managed to acquire long-term permits or citizenship used their permanent legal status in Italy to leave the country in search of better opportunities. By examining migrants' encounters with the Italian documentation regime, this paper will look at how the experience of the future is both one of oppressive uncertainty and of hope, as migrants seek to imagine of brighter futures elsewhere whilst wrestling with everyday structural marginalisation in the present.

Isabel González Enriquez (UNED, Spain)

Permanent chaos: the Colombian case

In my ethnographic research developed in marginal neighbourhoods around Bogotá through interviews and life stories 'real' time vanishes into an emotional succession of events, idealised lost paradises, unknown future paths and impossible dreams of return.

In a context of permanent uncertainty, high mobility and constant violence, my research illustrates how families are building their life projects and trying to belong to a city that does not recognise them as proper citizens. I analyse how their struggle to dignify their social and emotional living spaces is an ongoing phenomenon. Their migration is changing the shape of major cities, the role and participation level of women in urban life, and rural-urban relations all over the country, and could determine the possibility of a real change in Colombian society in the non-distant future.

Three million people have been forcefully displaced from their homes in Colombia. Millions of people have been pushed into moving to major cities in search for opportunities or state help which often is not received or is not enough. In Bogotá most of both displaced and economic migrants have been forced to relocate illegally and manually construct temporary shelters that have become shanty towns over the last twenty years.

Ana Mourao (Brunel)

"Don't think so much": living the 'present' in a migrant council estate in suburban Lisbon

Anthropology and sociology have in the past associated urban ethnic poverty settings with cultural traits of present-time orientation. Behaviours evincing a lack of investment in the future and a search for immediate gratification have been attributed to local systems of values, namely part of a 'culture of poverty', and argued to contribute to the reproduction of social immobility and poverty itself in those settings. This idea has been criticised, as among other things, it is ultimately 'blaming the victim'. Doing fieldwork in a council estate in suburban Lisbon, among residents relocated from shanty-towns (including a majority of Cape Verdean immigrants and their descendants), I have found similar types of attitudes towards the future, which are repeatedly pointed out and criticised by local institutions. The paper will describe these kinds of 'present-oriented' attitudes and behaviours, from everyday routines (frequent delays and unfulfilled plans), money-spending habits, attitudes towards schooling (with high rates of failure and abandonment) and future life-planning. The paper will highlight people's feelings of suspicion and hostility in their relation to the host Portuguese society, and subsequent dependence on (unstable) support networks among neighbours, as creating uncertain and unpredictable routines which underpin residents' attitudes towards planning. In particular, those factors will be argued to create, in Bourdieu's terms, the material 'objective conditions' which tailor individuals' temporal dispositions – their 'subjective expectations' regarding future (im)possibilities. By accounting for the dialectic relation between social constraints and cultural 'dispositions', this approach seeks to avoid the pitfalls of cultural determinism and 'blaming-the-victim' discourses,

while still recognising the central role of culture in local attitudes towards time and planning.

Melanie Griffiths (Oxford)

Living with uncertainty: long-term incarceration in British immigration detention

Immigration detention has become a central tenet of the British government's response to migration and increasing numbers of people now undergo administrative incarceration. Although intended to be used for minimal periods of time in order to facilitate removal, obstacles to deportation result in many people experiencing long periods of time in immigration detention. Unlike long term prisoners however, such people lack the luxury of knowing their length of imprisonment in advance and instead experience acute instability and an inability to predict their futures. They live with the constant threat of immediate and usually unwanted change, normalised only through the lengthy periods in which it is experienced. Using testimonies drawn from anthropological research at an Oxfordshire Immigration Removal Centre, I suggest that immigration detention is a fundamentally uncertain experience, particularly in relation to mobility, time frames and access to knowledge. Most detainees struggled to obtain information about their situation and many had no legal representation. Riots, fights, escapes and hunger-strikes made detention a periodically unsafe space. There was an ever-present threat of imminent deportation and people were moved around the UK between detention centres repeatedly and often without explanation. Deportations were particularly uncertain events, frequently cancelled at the last moment for unknown reasons. The paper examines the repercussions of such instability on individuals as well as their varied reactions and coping strategies. Using testimonies, it suggests that people experienced a dual uncertainty of time, in which time both stretched out endlessly and yet could bring abrupt and unwanted change without warning. It argues that immigration detainees live in a context of continual crisis, in which profound uncertainty becomes routine and as such provides a methodological challenge for researchers interested in understanding how uncertainty and disorder are made sense of by those affected.

Panel 3: Bodies and health

Karin Eli (Oxford)

Through certain illness: beginning to recover from eating disorders

How do people with long-term eating disorders begin processes of recovery? In the clinical literature, recovery from eating disorders has been portrayed as unreliable and uncommon: a medical coin-toss at fifty percent chance, with 'chronic' eating disorder growing increasingly likely as each year passes. Yet, through longitudinal fieldwork interviews with Israeli anorexia and bulimia sufferers (2005-2006, 2011), I learned how paths of seeming 'chronicity' wind toward recovery, and found that these paths often emanate from a certainty in illness. Within the realm of chronic illness, eating disorders constitute a special case. To become ill, as medical anthropologists have shown, is to be thrust into liminality and chaos: the self redefined against a new uncertainty of being. Yet, in

eating disorders, the liminality of illness is desired, and it is recovery, not illness, that constitutes uncertainty. For people with eating disorders, to recover is to re-emerge into an unpredictable social and material world, whose very fragility and volatility they attempted to negotiate through illness. Recovery, then, is not a reclamation of a healthy past, but a foray into an unknown future, where bodies, practices, and identities are to be transformed. With particular attention to participants with long-term eating disorders (ranging from 5 to 23 years), this paper examines narratives of emergent recovery processes. It demonstrates how the participants constructed the establishment of certain illness – the daily routines of liminal being, the mastery of eating disordered practice, the stasis of an ill-identity – as the foundation that allowed their recovery processes to begin, thereby offering a new understanding of the meanings of (un)certainty in eating disorders.

Emma Jayne Abbots (SOAS)

Searching for certainty in the supermarket: expatriates' bodies and the risky business of eating in Highland Ecuador

In this paper, through the lens of risk, trust and certainty, I explore the disjuncture between expatriate dreams of consuming 'simple' foods and the embodied reality of their everyday eating experiences. The city of Cuenca, situated in the Southern Ecuadorean Andes, is home to an increasing number of retired North Americans, many of whom are searching for a 'simple life and simple food'. A desire to improve their risk position (Beck 1991), by reasserting control over the substances that enter their bodies and escaping the industrial food chains of the USA, is one of the primary motivations these expatriates cite for moving to Ecuador, and the valorisation of short food chains, peasant producers and local produce is a recurring motif. Yet, in practice, they commonly avoid Cuencano retailers and markets, preferring instead to eat food obtained from the 'safe', 'sterile' and 'certain' environment of the supermarket, where it is clearly labelled, often imported, and certified 'organic'. My purpose in this paper is therefore to examine this contradiction between discourse and practice. I argue that expatriate estrangements from Cuencano foods and markets are, in part, informed by their lack of trust in local retailers and uncertainties over their produce, and show how these relations are compounded by expatriates' own bodily reactions. Consequently they, paradoxically, locate 'certainty' in state-supported regulation and the familiar, complex food chains they originally intended to 'escape'. This practice, I suggest, relates to expatriates' broader fears over 'foreign bodies', in the form of local people, pesticides and pathogens, and I thus highlight how they look to (re)assert social and bodily boundaries, as well as elucidating the ways in which trust, knowledge and certainty are constituted through the body.

Rodney Reynolds (UCL)

Web based communities of practice and public health

This paper seeks to interrogate the nature of communities of practice in relation to (public) health and query how such communities might arise through the use of web technologies. The technical network that constitutes Web 2.0 provides pathways for innovation and creative use. It offers a framework as a solution to the problem of resource identification that can be applied to specific problems or

issues. In this way, Web 2.0 mirrors and intersects with public health, which is increasingly concerned with its changing global role and how partnerships are critical to attainment of public health goals. One way in which public health functions as a framework is reflected in the development of online communities of practice. I argue that conceptualisation of public health as a framework gives emphasis to the discipline's characteristic of drawing on other frameworks to provide relevant tools to achieve desired outcomes. Communities of practice are one illustration of this tendency. Because public health focuses on health at the level of a population, the people who are the objects of public health studies are composites of traits, numbers and characteristics. They are the opposite of flesh, bone, blood and sinew, feeling and thought. Yet, public health interventions are grounded in interactions with people. I offer that Web 2.0 communities of practice are a way of bridging the gap between health practice and concept. Key however is that such bridges must be actively produced. This paper suggests one way in which ethnographic research had led to conclusions about how they might be.

Bob Fryer (Department of Health and True Blue Consultancy)

WEBWISE: a methodology for transcultural health research

This paper takes as its central problem elaboration of knowledge practices required for interdisciplinary and transcultural health research. It describes a project that will constitute part of a UK contribution to a wider European Union-funded project on the application of Web 2.0 methods and approaches in educational programmes and learning scenarios in the field of public health. The project is entitled WEBWISE. (The other countries taking part are Bulgaria, Italy, Germany, Greece and Slovenia.) WEBWISE is based on an earlier joint European project, WHOLE (Web Health Online Learning Environment). It will consider areas of critical public health need in London boroughs and suggest research approaches that would make good use of new web technologies joined with face-to-face field based data collection.

Ruth Mowlam (UCL)

Reducing teen parents' vulnerability through web based 'interaction'

This paper describes the outcomes of small group research undertaken in the context of a UCL course in advanced medical anthropology. The research took as its objective understanding how social exclusion, often experienced by young or teen parents living in the London borough of Camden, could be addressed through the use of Web 2.0 tools and technologies. Given the premise that vulnerability to poor health outcomes and pregnancy during teen-aged years is associated with social inequalities our research asks if mutual relationships of social support amongst teen parents would be facilitated if interactive internet software were made central to healthcare and information provision directed to this cohort. Aside from providing the opportunity for teen parents to solicit care and information in response to their need from peers, medical authorities and service delivery providers such a horizontal programme encourages parents to proactively contribute to information dissemination through the addition of links to useful services and to sharing personal experiences that could be of benefit to others in similar situations. As medical students who have received a year of social and medical anthropological training, our research group sought to

problematise what would be meant by interaction for programme participants, service delivery providers and medical practitioners. We conclude by highlighting the trade-offs that are necessary to support interaction and that often involve acute pressure on logistical planning.

Panel 4: Materiality, media and play

Adam Connelly (Brunel)

This presentation draws from my research in an elite private school in Darjeeling, North India. The research sought to investigate the subtle nuances that link such forms of English medium schooling with middle class identity in India. The school I selected took particular pride in its academic record, regular winning performances in various sports competitions and a tradition of music and drama.

In the paper, I examine the role of school in determining future trajectories of students with a special focus on the school's 'major play'. The play was conceived and written by the students, as well as arranging a score of sorts from their favourite music, choreographing dance routines and of course playing the lead roles. The play sought to ask the question that the boys faced which was, 'what happens next?' I will offer a brief insight into life at this illustrious school through the prism of this theatrical production. I aim to illustrate some of the key issues apparent in my thesis. With the exam season imminent and their futures in the balance, I aim to show how students sought to provide some stability through artistic expression. I will also provide a brief summation of the fraught and frantic rehearsals and how the laid back group of boys managed to navigate the potentially stressful uncertainty of whether or not the play will meet its tight deadline. I will touch on how the students battled against political protests, earthquakes and landslides to even get to school. So come along and follow the adventures of JJ and Kevin as they move out from the safety of their school into a world of singing superstars, tattoo artists, dingy clubs, salsa dancers, showbiz parties, drug addiction, talent agents, cancer, mobsters, prostitutes and Elvis impersonators.

Nick Gadsby (UCL)

Certainty through contingency: transformations in massively multiplayer online games

There is a considerable volume of literature in the social sciences on risk and contingency, but very little that considers the structuring roles of certainty. In perhaps the most influential anthropological study of games to date Thomas Malaby defines them as contrived 'domains of contingency'; he goes on to explain that games are a means by which people may engage with. I wish to add a further dimension to Malaby's anthropology of games, by drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork with players of massively multiplayer online games like *World of Warcraft* and *Star Wars: The Old Republic*, which demonstrates the way that the people who play these games use the technological affordances to attempt to create certain outcomes. Among the topics I discuss are: 'transcendent technologies': the idea that underpins my work is that online

games are essentially mediums for the transcendence of conventional forms of time and space which have the capacity to overcome the uncertainties that dog the quotidian aspects of life. But that this is a constant struggle against the constraints of the material bases that make transcendence possible in the first place; 'materialising subjects' – anonymity and weak social ties mean that other people are one of the most unpredictable aspects of MMOs; but both players and the designers of the games have devised ways to fix identity through to ensure that the correct kinds of subjects may be identified; 'collective certainties': beyond the boundaries of the games themselves players use online technologies to create collective forms of certainty that in effect aim to transform the unpredictability of play into something closer to the certainty of performance.

Tom McDonald (UCL)

Internet connections, place, and the struggle for familial co-presence in a south-western Chinese town

This paper draws on ethnographic evidence to examine the social implications of different methods of internet access on family life and kinship in a county-town in south-west China. As opposed to many established theoretical approaches to the internet, which have placed an emphasis on the separateness of online and offline spaces, this paper asserts that an ethnographic approach to the internet lends itself to a better understanding of both of these domains, and the interconnectedness between them. Adopting such an approach in this fieldsite precipitates two sociological observations: first, for young people who use the internet in the town, these online spaces predominantly provide mediated communication with pre-existing networks of friends in their immediate offline social world; secondly, that young people's patronage of internet cafes to undertake these forms of communication with their peers necessitates an absence from an altogether different network: the kinship network of parents, grandparents and family.

Parents respond to this uncertainty relating to their children's activities with anxiety regarding their offspring's vulnerability to an array of dangers perceived to be located in the 'offline' environment of the internet cafe (i.e. disease, dirt, radiation, immoral people, etc.); which far outweigh concerns they have for hazards that may exist online.

This overriding concern with the safety of the environment of internet cafes, rather than online safety, has provoked a particular parental response. Parents in the town are adopting, in ever-increasing numbers, home broadband connections chiefly in an attempt to regain the presence of their children at home. This chapter will illustrate that the introduction of home broadband, however, creates a series of unexpected consequences in the home, challenging the flows and patterns of everyday life in the domestic sphere. Developing Shove's (2003) theories on domestic routines, it will argue that the degree of success to which such internet technologies are able to become integrated into family life is dependent on the extent to which these technologies challenge or sustain pre-existing routines within the home.

Barbara Knorpp (Brunel)

Invisible films, memories and dreams: ethnography of a national film archive

This paper examines the politics and poetics of a film archive. It raises questions not only about the patterns of engagement, suppression, and unspeakability but more importantly about the invisibility of celluloid film in the public space and public consciousness. The late 20th century and beginning 21st century has shifted from the 'object as knowledge' and as Margaret Mead in her seminal article 'Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words' suggests, employs the image for establishing a newly won certainty of capturing human culture and behaviour. With the development of a global mediascape, to borrow Arjun Appadurai's term, the production and circulation of images have to some extent replaced the objects itself.

What kind of narratives are film archives constructing and for whom? In my recent ethnographic research at the British Film Institute (BFI), London, which began with watching ethnographic films that tend not to be available to the public eye, I am exploring the ways in which staff members and users of the national film archive make sense of the archive, what it means to them and how they relate to original evidence. The BFI collection, established in 1935 as the National Film Library, now holds around 275,000 feature films and recently received a £25 million funding packet from the government, the most ever rewarded to an archive. Whereas Walter Benjamin's notion of mechanical reproduction is celebrating the possibility to access art in the form of photography, digitalisation of celluloid film reacts to similar demands but also raises political concerns towards the democratisation of (visual) cultural heritage and memory.

Senior staff members' fantasies of mass access to the archive in digital form often clash with experiences of the users and lovers of the film archives. For the researchers who are working with the originals, the aura of the celluloid reel holds a special magic, evoked by the darkness of the film cubicle, the analogue sound of the Steenbeck, and the wonderfully incongruent passing of film time and real time. The archive, Carolyn Steedman argues in her book 'Dust', 'allowed for a particular and modern form of loneliness, which was perhaps analogues to the simultaneous conception of the historian's relationship to the past as one of 'irretrievable dispossession'. In regard to certainty of knowledge, the fragile physical property of film and the death of cinema all over the world, especially in countries without funding for the preservation of film, lead to the disappearance and forgetting of thousands of hours of film. Preservation of film, even kept in ideal conditions at -5 degree and 35% humidity as in newly build the BFI master film store in Gaydon, Warwickshire at the cost of £12 million, is not equivalent to access. With a lack of extra viewing copies and the awareness of the ephemeral character of films, many films remain invisible, which is a contradiction in itself. The archive therefore, I am arguing in my paper, is a place of forgetting, a place of memories and dreams.

Leaning on the Jewish German art historian Aby Warburg's 'Mnemmosyne' picture atlas as a form of visual methodology, the presentation will be

accompanied by a series of photographs taken at the archive and the conservation areas since the inception of the project in November 2011.

Rachel Scicluna (Open University)

The Kitchen is good to think with

This paper aims to look at the anthropological meaning of the domestic kitchen through the stories of older lesbians residing in contemporary London.

Despite the fact that recent debates have been reflecting especially on the meaning and social significance of the home in contemporary societies, the kitchen has received little attention within such debates. In the late nineteenth century, it is clear that the kitchen was an important strand within feminism where political issues were raised to challenge certain characteristics of industrial capitalism, mainly those pertaining to the separation of household space from public space and divisions according to class. Such debates also addressed other issues such as gender equality, women's rights and women's oppression where material feminist theorists even favoured a kitchenless home. Although, recently some scholars have given attention to routine (social) practices and the technologisation of kitchen-work, such research, according to Floyd (2004), has tended to 'drain the kitchen of significance' when in practice this merely redefines the space.

All such debates suggest that the kitchen is a complex place which is politically and culturally charged. They raise key issues which pertain to the complexity of human relations. In this paper, I would like to explore the idea of how the kitchen may be used as *an analytical tool to think with* in order to understand the logic of a particular group of people. Through its multifunctional character, the kitchen becomes a place where the power of the ordinary, the mundane, and the everyday unfolds, and it is the place where all spheres of life inter-weave in the most taken-for-granted ways. The kitchen offers a cultural context for a deep understanding of society.

Panel 5: Environmental certainties and uncertainties

What does it mean to be 'certain' about environmental knowledge? This panel takes its cue from debates about changing environments, the role of human behaviour in triggering these changes, and the role they have in diverse social settings. How much do people in different places base their lives on environmental certainties, and what happens when these certainties are challenged? What are the strategies that societies have developed for dealing with environmental instabilities? Looking across a range of different ecological and social settings, we are interested in the varied ways that people gather, interpret, and communicate environmental knowledge, and the extent to which our lived understandings assume a stability in the natural systems that surround us. On what basis do people make decisions about their environment, and what kinds of decisions are deemed a risk? This leads us toward an examination of the ways that people learn to treat environmental knowledge as 'certain' or 'uncertain'. Knowledge about climate change, for example, has been the trigger

for a great deal of advocacy and evangelism, but it has also been met with a scepticism that challenges those who speak about climate change as a certainty.

The idea behind this panel is to provide a space for thinking through the different ways that people talk about, and act in relation to, the environment they know (or believe they know). It is also an opportunity to explore the resources people draw upon when imagining their futures. In doing this, we hope to provide an opportunity to think about the kind of role anthropologists might play in describing environmental changes and the social forces that surround those changes.

Richard Irvine (Cambridge)

Environmental certainties and uncertainties: an introduction

This primary goal of this paper will be to offer a brief background to anthropological discussions of environmental change, and to introduce some of the important themes that connect the papers in this panel. In order to give some context, some of these themes will be explored through the lens of environmental change in the East Anglian Fenlands, UK, where I have carried out ethnographic and historical research. Looking into the deep past of environmental flux in this region, I will ask whether climate histories provide a resource for understanding contemporary environmental changes, and what forms these climate histories might take.

Barbara Bodenhorn (Cambridge)

Risky decisions: uncertain environmental conditions; climate changes and the conduct of whaling in Arctic Alaska

In May, 1997 close to 150 Inupiat whalers were caught by surprise by an 'ice calving event' which meant that large chunks of hitherto 'shore fast ice' broke off and began to drift west carrying the whalers with them. Despite near zero visibility, the North Slope Borough Search and Rescue Department were able to rescue all of the stranded whalers, largely because each crew had locator technology with them. The entire process was subject to much discussion concerning what may and may not be known about ice behaviour and how that knowledge should shape whaling decisions. This event, which sparked my interest in how whalers are (and are not) incorporating their observations concerning changing ice conditions into their decisions concerning the conduct of whaling, will form the basis of this paper's suggestion that 'risk' as well as 'uncertainty' need to be evaluated along several axes of value. Some of these revolve around an awareness that some knowledge is no longer as certain as it was; others acknowledge the extent to which 'uncertainty' and unpredictability are assumed to be part of the Arctic environment in which people must survive.

Joe Webster (Cambridge)

The eschatology of global warming in a Scottish fishing village

In Gamrie, an Aberdeenshire fishing village home to 700 people and six millennialist Protestant churches, global warming is more than just a 'hoax' – it is a demonic conspiracy that threatens to bring about the ruin of the entire human race. Such a certainty was rendered intelligible to local Christians by viewing it through the lens of premillennialist dispensationalist theology brought to the

village by the 'Plymouth Brethren'. In a play on Weberian notions of disenchantment, then, I argue that Gamrie's Christians rejected *global warming* as a false eschatology and *environmentalism* as a false salvationist religion, thereby re-appropriating both as enchanted signs of the end times. Importantly, these rejections need to be understood as emerging not only from local theological convictions, but also from local livelihoods, that is, from the (profoundly uncertain) politics and economics of Scotland's deep sea fishing industry.

Hannah Fair (Cambridge)

Catastrophic, monstrous and generative: competing Maldivian visions of the sea and their implications for climate change certainty

Beginning with a series of personal, mythic and legendary Maldivian narratives of the sea, this paper explores different conceptions of the relationship between people, land and ocean in the Maldives. It recounts stories of the sea as a source of monstrosity, as generative of Maldivian identity and as a means of religious sanction and catastrophe.

These competing conceptions can be used to problematise the nation's official scientifically-rooted narrative of climate change certainty. This paper argues that while this certainty provides tangible material benefits, it is achieved at the expense of recognising the potent symbolic meanings invested in sea level changes. Instead this paper proposes that a relation between people and oceans that is characterised by fluidity and uncertainty may be a source of resilience in adapting to future climatic changes.

Panel 6: Politics, violence and memory

Ana Santos (Brunel)

'It's not my story to tell': violence, memory and the search for certainty in Mocimboa da Praia, Mozambique

Following contested local elections in 2005, the district of Mocimboa da Praia in Northern Mozambique was shaken by sudden riots. After the riots discussions were centred around past experiences of violence and these narratives were often offered as way of explaining the recent events. The local tensions leading up to the violence were discussed with reference to differing group allegiances and experiences during the liberation struggle (1964-1974), which was fought largely in Northern Mozambique. The different experiences of the war were alluded to during discussions of the riots and suggested explanations for past and present group dynamics as well as a search for certainty during very uncertain circumstances. Diverse experiences of/responses to colonialism were pointed to as a possible reason for present day grievances along with political affiliation. Here I will discuss the importance of collective memory, violence and public celebrations in the narrative around past events. I will discuss the symbolic representation of war, the official narrative of the past, and local counter-memories and the ways these are used when discussing recent events. Based on fieldwork conducted in Northern Mozambique, drawing on participant observation of public celebrations and extensive interviews I will discuss the

importance of commemoration, memory and story telling in the understanding of past and the way these played a part during an uncertain present. I will also address tensions surrounding questions of belonging, expressed through claiming or refusing ownership of local histories, and the ways in which the past is perceived as a place of certainty during uncertain times.

Giorgia Doná (UEL)

Uncertain memories: virtual memorialisation and the politics of performative remembering in Rwanda

‘Virtual memorialising’ – the remembering of past events in cyberspace – offers innovative ways for social actors to perform the politics of memory at the uncertain intersection of local, national and transnational spaces. Based on analysis of the Kigali Genocide Memorial virtual site and fieldwork in Rwanda, I discuss the relationship between memory and politics, and how the use of new technologies influences the politics of memory in uncertain post-conflict processes of societal rebuilding.

The ‘Kigali Genocide Memorial’ is a virtual site that contains independent yet related stories: photos of memorial sites scattered across Rwanda, the history of the genocide inside Rwanda and other genocides across the world, and testimonies of survivors. The virtual site transcends the physicality of memorial sites to generate a virtual performative narrative of social suffering that reaches national and international audiences.

Virtual memorialisation in post-genocide Rwanda illustrates a dialogical tension between: a) the corporeal and a-corporeal dimensions of memory. Memorial sites are viewed as embodied memories but what happens when these sites are disembodied virtual sites? b) a –political and political strategies. When remembering is reliant on representations of social suffering and trauma, are we witnessing humanistic performative memories of violence and/or the use of humanistic and medical representations as political strategies for nation-building? , and c) the relationship between national and transnational virtual subjectivities: when virtual memories are appropriated by nation-states, civil societies, transnational diasporic groups, or the international community, what happens to their related subjectivities in cyberspace?

Tom Selwyn (SOAS)

Heritage and its puppeteers: capital, contention, and Euro-Mediterranean ‘heritage’

Performances about the historical formation of Mediterranean ‘heritage’ by the Sicilian Puppet Theatre inspire the thought that a primary question for this conference concerns the politico-economic forces behind those who pull the strings of Mediterranean ‘heritage’ today. This talk builds on work by EC inter-university projects in the region (especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Palestine and key coastal cities) and the recently published *Contested Mediterranean Spaces* (eds Kousis, Selwyn, and Clark) to think critically about the nature of heritage itself.

Toni Baum (SOAS)

Surprising reality in Israel-Palestine

We talk about uncertainty as a starting point for theories of identity and agency, but what do 'certainty' and 'uncertainty' actually mean for ordinary people? Are they necessarily opposed concepts or are there alternative approaches to the critique of 'uncertainty'? Drawing on ethnographic research amongst a diverse 'peace making' social network in Israel-Palestine, I examine social relations amidst the longest military occupation in modern history. In protracted violent conflict uncertainty and instability become routine banalities. Fear, hatred and despair are woven into the fabric of daily life. Traumatized populations anticipate violence and victimisation. Fear and defensiveness produce a pervasive sense of cynicism and the feeling that nothing new can happen. One Palestinian musician described the discursive status quo as 'the stuck record'.

My study of a social network of ordinary Israelis and Palestinians who seek to make peace for and among themselves analyses recalcitrance in a situation of violent conflict and occupation. I argue that their endurance of daily life and their ability to find agency and meaning is based on an acceptance, enjoyment and nurturing of uncertainty conceived variously as 'not knowing', faith, awareness and imagination. Whilst Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's response to the uncertainty of Arab Spring was, 'the only stable country is this democracy Israel', the network wrote songs in solidarity with people seeking freedom and democracy in Egypt and engaged across the turbulent border through Facebook. More importantly, they are continually meeting with people from radically diverse backgrounds, not in the hope for stability or revolution, but in the shared belief that change is inevitable and that everyone is responsible. Traversing left and right-wing, religious and secular, they believe that the best response to process and flux is radical openness to each encounter as it arises. As a Jewish musician explained, 'We are surprising reality until it changes'.

Jason Hickel (LSE)

Liberalism and anarchy in Occupy Wall Street

Occupy Wall Street has become one of the most widely known and commented-on social movements in Europe and North America. It started in Manhattan when a small group of activists took control of Zuccotti Park under the catchy slogan 'We are the 99%'. They were evicted the following November, but not before organizing massive marches through New York, shutting down key bridges and ports, and inspiring occupations in hundreds of cities across North America and Europe (including London, which I joined). Most importantly, Occupy brought the problem of widening social inequalities and patterns of elite accumulation into mainstream consciousness. But what happened to the fervour that propelled Occupy last fall? How do we explain the movement's rapid decline after a period of such promising efflorescence? I argue that Occupy's initial traction lay in its departure from the forms of political engagement that have come to dominate liberal progressivism in the era of late capitalism – by this I mean specifically since the counterculture movement that began in 1968, which spawned new forms of political subjectivity that ended up becoming deeply tied to capitalist consumerism. Occupy managed to escape the paradigm of apolitical politics that proceeds from post-68 forms of political subjectivity, and from the ethic of egalitarian tolerance, compromise, and inclusiveness that informs much of

liberal politics (particularly in the United States). But this escape has been partial and incomplete; Occupy's consensus process and demand-free platform – the two hallmarks of its supposed radicalism – have smuggled some of the most crippling aspects of the liberal ethic back into the core of the movement, undermining its ability to create compelling alternatives to the neoliberal status quo. The story of Occupy's rise and decline offers grist for the analysis of shifting and uncertain forms of and political conviction in contemporary Euro-American society.

Panel 7: Work

Elena Gonzalez Polledo and Victoria Goddard (Goldsmiths)

Mis-recognitions and visions of the future: generations and change in the steel industry

This paper draws on the research findings of a large-scale comparative study of the steel industry to discuss the mis-recognitions that frequently inform workers' views about the future of work and the future of the steel industry. Over the last two decades profound technical, technological and organisational changes have taken place, such that the notion of a secure and valued job-for-life has been replaced by fragmentation of the work-force, the casualisation of work and the exclusion from work of large numbers of young workers. These conditions lead to contradictory understandings about the nature of work, the qualities of different kinds of worker – particularly the young and unemployed – and the prospects for a future based on industrial employment. In particular, we explore the implications of perceptions of 'certainty' in the past that emerge from narratives about the conditions of work and life of steel workers and their families, for the ways in which the uncertainties of the present and the future are understood and addressed. We explore what strategies might be identified by individuals, families and firms in a context in which global commodity and financial markets ultimately draw and redraw the possibilities of existence of the industry in any given locality.

Johanna Woydack (Kings)

Uncertainty in a post-Fordist labour market, standardisation practices and outbound call centres: an ethnographic critique

In social theory there has been a long-standing, mostly critical debate about standardisation dating back to Marx and Weber. The dominant Marxian and Weberian approaches have taken standardisation to result in dehumanisation and deskilling of workers, attributing to the uncertainty in today's labour market. With post-Fordism being reliant on standardisation and increasing globalisation requiring more standardisation, standardisation is again at the forefront of criticism and of renewed interest to academics. The workplace considered most representative of these developments and controversial are call centres. Indeed, call centres are considered one of *the* globalised workplace and an iconic standardised workplace of the new economy. In the literature that is mostly non-ethnographic, especially scripts are blamed for the deskilling of agents, rendering them easily replaceable and forcing them to accept high job flexibility (temporary contracts) causing high job uncertainty. This research

considers standardisation beyond the negative perception of Marxist and Weberian approaches, as a source of certainty. Drawing on five years of fieldwork in a call centre, this research discusses a) staff's perception towards standardisation b) the 'career of a script'. Methodologically, participant observation and interviews were conducted at an IT call centre in London that speaks '300 languages and calls the whole world'. Its employees are temporary, multilingual, highly skilled workers who are new to the London labour market after recently having graduated or migrated to the UK. The study finds agents to talk about standardisation as source of certainty a) enabling them to work in call centres without technical knowledge and with limited language skills b) offering guidance and stability c) allowing them to convert their experience into capital for 'real jobs'. Therefore, using the concept of certainty allows us to rethink and critique our understanding of standardisation, workers' uncertainty in today's labour market and approaches towards standardisation.

Theodoros Rakopouloa (Goldsmiths)

Anti-mafia cooperativism as certainty? Changing experiences of labour in Sicily

Deregulation of labour markets has proliferated a plethora of precarious, petty (often informal) income opportunities. Much of the recent literature in economic anthropology addresses people's 'modes of resistance', or 'responses', to the breaking down of employment categories that 'neoliberal' structural adjustment introduces. Many ethnographers suggest the 'neoliberal' state is unwilling to guarantee a stable and certain labour market. Some emphasise 'precariousness' as constitutive of exploitative labour experiences, or explore flexibilised labour regimes producing specific 'creative types' of workers. Others suggested that the labour market uncertainty allows the development of brokerage, where mafia-like organisations find a niche.

This line of argument states that the neoliberal attacks on regulated categories of labour encourage people to endorse seasonal work and petty or illicit entrepreneurial activity. Ethnographically exploring the 'anti-mafia cooperatives' of Alto Belice, Western Sicily, my paper diverges from such anthropological work, as in Sicily, the 'neoliberal' state, because of the politicised project of the 'anti-mafia' it supports, actually pursues the enactment of workers' rights, as per the case of the anti-mafia cooperatives' 'standardisation'. Employment in the cooperatives seemingly promotes livelihood certainty. However, incorporating vulnerable workers into standardised regimes of labour does not imply that their everyday economic activity is canonised, as it still leaves room for ambiguous livelihoods strategies, between the certainty of 'anti-mafia' wage employment and a mafia-affiliated informal economy. Therefore, employment 'standardisation' co-articulates with informal means of livelihood. Towards the configuration between formal employment and other means of livelihood, people mobilised local practices, informed by gendered ideologies of labour, which were, perhaps ironically, influenced by mafia. Locals in Alto Belice embraced new income opportunities (land registration for women) and defended older ones ('mutual aid' schemes of informal work).

Mark Jamieson (UEL)

Cocaine, land and money: uncertain futures on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast

This paper is concerned with the rapid changes and associated uncertainties that are affecting indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast. In the last decade and a half this region has experienced both impoverishment and, for some, opportunities to become comparatively wealthy through involvement in three sectors of a progressively more monetised economy: menial labour on cruise ships and associated remittances sent home by cruise ship workers; work and entrepreneurship in the extraction of marine resources, notably lobster; and involvement in narco-trafficking and related activities. In addition to the uncertainties generated by these developments legal consolidations of land rights in indigenous and Afro-descendent communities have been accompanied both by invasions of landless campesinos in those territories and by the appearance of logging and fishing companies contesting the rights of those communities to their control over resources found in those lands.

The growing significance of these areas of economic activity, notably the involvement of local people in the cocaine trade, has produced uncertainties of a number of kinds, but it is the area of social processes centred on domestic organisation and family life in the region's small villages with which I am concerned in this paper. The monetisation of the region's economy has resulted in the movement of the control of certain key resources away from women to men, with a concomitant reconfiguration of residence patterns in some villages and increases in inter-kin group hostilities and levels of crime in others. Meanwhile the appearance of landless campesinos seeking opportunities on their lands and loggers and fish-buyers seeking to exploit their resources is producing uncertainties of other kinds that cross-cut those described above. This paper examines in specific terms the ways by which progressively monetisation in an economy, hitherto focused primarily on subsistence farming and fishing and various forms of reciprocity, is causing a shift in tendency away from 'traditional' forms of domestic organisation to new kinds, and looks at the consequent effects of increases in inter-kin group hostility and levels of crime. It also considers the likely effects of conflicts originated in land rights disputes in a region that is already in national terms both marginalised and politically sensitive.

Jennie Gamlin (UCL)

Certainty, risk and knowledge among Huichol tobacco pickers

This paper will discuss the different forms of knowledge that Huichol migrant workers generate about the risk of exposure to pesticides and their effect on the body, in particular what gives them certainty in this knowledge about risk. The theoretical proposal here is to move beyond the belief/knowledge dichotomy that is unhelpful when talking about Huichol understandings since these categorical divisions do not exist in their language and culture and instead to explore how they reach certainty in their understanding of risks that are outside the boundaries of their traditional lifeworlds.

The Huichol, who are among the most marginalised and geoculturally isolated indigenous groups in Mexico, live in the North Western Sierra Madre mountain

range and supplement their lives as subsistence farmers with seasonal agricultural labouring. This research was conducted on the tobacco plantations of Nayarit state, an industry that has survived in large part because the Huichol migrants who pick and thread this tobacco are prepared to work for extremely low wages, since this particular migration enables them to also fulfil important religious rites. This is a family migration attended by parents, grandparents and children and the workers sleep in the open air beside the tobacco plants, exposing themselves day and night to pesticide residues.

Many workers knew that pesticides were used in large quantities and could talk about the different health effects. Some derived this understanding from campaigns, others had 'been told' and some were certain of this, because they had personally experienced the effects of pesticides. Huichol life in the sierra revolves around a religious-agricultural cycle and rituals that are embodied in their conception of wellbeing. This also forms the basis for their understanding of risk. There is a great sense of distrust in other forms of knowledge and certainty seems only to exist through personal experience.

Panel 8: Religion

Adnan Khan (Brunel)

Doing Pukhto through participation in sorrows and joys; fieldwork experiences in North West Pakistan

The paper examines the importance of participation in sorrows and joys (*gham khadee*) in a small village of the remote Dir District of Pakistan. The paper shows how participation in sorrows and joys is a significant part of the *Pakhtunness* of an individual, and how someone who does not actively participate in such events is marginalised and *de-pakhtunised*. The paper considers who carries *gham khadee* relationships and with whom? How are these relationships maintained on different occasions? I discuss how the politicians manipulate the events of sorrows and joys to gain political support. The paper also looks at the other tenets (revenge, hospitality) of Pakhtun code of life (Pakhtunwali) within the context of *gham khadee*. Because of having no access to the women of the locale little emphasis is placed on the *gham khadee* relationships among the women of the village (that is the men's view of the women's *gham khadee*).

André Chappatte (SOAS)

Adventures through the certainty of God in southwest Mali

'If you manage to hold your calabash up to your ankle, God will help you to raise it up on your head.' (*Bamanan* proverb)

Following the example of prosperous religious leaders in Mali, most Muslims understand wealth as an index of social status and of blessing; they treat consumption as a sign of success in life. Then, many rural Muslims respond to the challenge of earthly ambitions through migration in urban area.

For them, migration is about adventures (*tunga*), a deep and risky experience which starts as soon as they leave their village. *Tunga* is about the distance, the unknown and the novelty; it is a way of learning and getting mature. It also involves the tension between honour (*danbé*) and shame (*maloya*); Muslims who leave home know social expectations placed on their shoulder, but the rest is in the hands of God.

Here I focus on the world view of the Muslim believer in order to understand where the Muslim adventurer is heading to, how he perceives the unfolding of his life as the will of God and, to what extent, he can influence the almighty will of God upon his life. The certainty of God, which accompanied the believer along the tortuous path of *tunga*, is not associated with fatalism. On the contrary, the certainty of God is a religious sentiment which gives courage, patience, and creativity to Muslim adventurers I met during the 18 months of fieldwork I undertook in the town of Bougouni in southwest Mali.

My paper then proposes to explore Muslim adventurers' quest towards a better life through the study of their cosmology of migration based on local perception of destiny (*dakan*) and its causes (*sababu*); Muslim believers deploy many strategies aiming at attracting God's favour on their earthly fate.

Sarah O'Neill (Goldsmiths)

The power of the water and the enticement of the money economy: competing knowledge practices between Fulani fishermen and other castes in the Senegal riverbasin

The Subalbe are the masters of the river. They are known to be the proprietors of the knowledge of the water and in close contact with its spirits. Some Jaltaabe (experienced fisherman) are locally known to be so powerful that they can make a Fulbe herder and his cattle return back through the river through their magical 'knowledge' of the water if the herder has not asked for permission to cross. Every caste is said to own the knowledge of their domain that other status groups do not have access to and this helps them exercise power over elements that all locals depend on. Although Fulbe herders, Ceddo warriors and Toroobe clerics are higher status castes, the Subalbe's ability to 'control' the river has somewhat equalised power relations between these groups.

The growing prevalence of state school education, however, has impacted upon how traditional knowledge practices are valued and how they grant authority and power. Whereas in the past, a person adept in spiritual knowledge practices was highly regarded and respected, youngsters following Western education consider this knowledge superfluous. Political influence, power and social mobility are now achieved through one's ability to engage with the statutory structures and the demands of the globalising society. This paper explores changing power relations between status groups and how the Subalbe re-evaluate their 'knowledge of the water' through education and their transforming perceptions of how wealth, success and recognition should be achieved.